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SPEECH NOTES
for the
FIFTIETH ANNIVERSARY OF THE MEAT INSPECTION
PROGRAM



June 1956

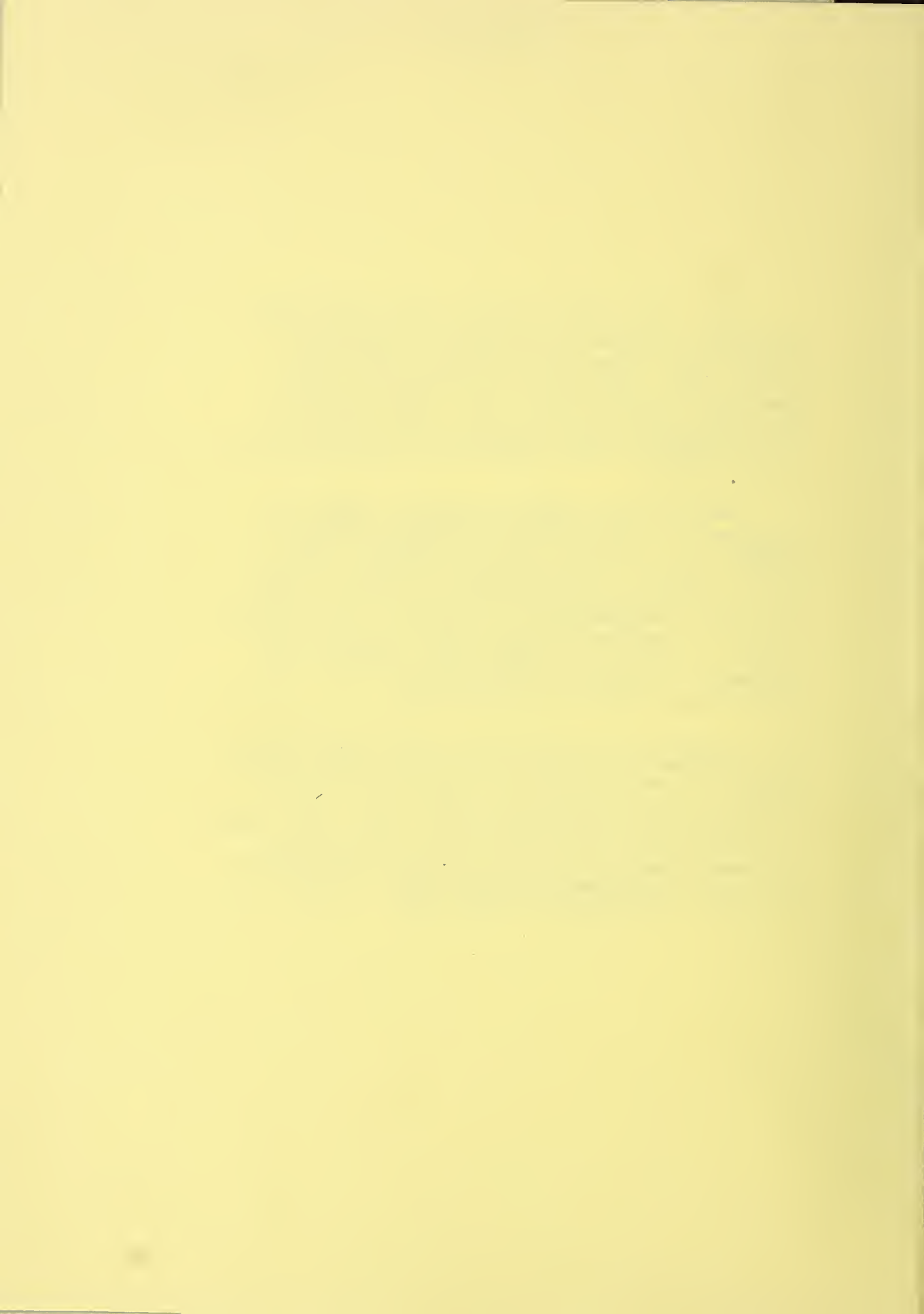
UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
Agricultural Research Service

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These notes provide background and other basic information for speeches by Federal inspectors in charge of Meat Inspection, livestock specialists, county agents, and other officials for use in the development of talks on the Golden Anniversary of the Federal Meat Inspection Act. These notes also will be useful on later occasions in developing talks on this Service.

The notes cover more material than likely will be needed in any one speech. Moreover, different phases of the inspection work are covered in some detail, and it is suggested that the material covered be tailored to the particular occasion and the audience or interest group. The speaker, for example, will want to emphasize those points of special interest to consumers in talking with a town or city audience. On the other hand, in talking with a farm group, other phases may need emphasis.

In order to aid the speaker, the material has been organized in sections, each with a summary paragraph. In some instances the speaker may want to use only the summary paragraph; in others, he may want to use the complete discussion. Using these notes a speaker should be able to put together a speech tailored for any particular occasion, touching briefly on some points and discussing others in detail according to the interests of the group.



SPEECH NOTES
for the
FIFTIETH ANNIVERSARY OF THE MEAT INSPECTION
PROGRAM

For 50 years a round purple stamp has been a symbol of purity on the meats you buy. Bearing the legend "U. S. Inspected and Passed," the stamp certifies that the meat has come from a healthy animal and passed the high standards for wholesomeness and cleanliness of the Federal Government.

It was on June 30, 1906, that the Congress approved the law requiring Government supervision over cleanliness and wholesomeness of meat marketed in interstate and foreign commerce. This Act makes the Secretary of Agriculture responsible for seeing that provisions of the law are carried out and for maintaining the Federal meat inspection service. The work is carried on by the Meat Inspection Branch in the Agricultural Research Service of the Department, with the full cooperation of packers and processors.

The round purple stamp is used only for meats and meat products prepared and processed in plants that sell in interstate and foreign commerce. Inspection work deals almost entirely with cattle, calves, sheep and hogs, although goats and horses are included. Companion to the purple stamp is the same assurance in print on the label of Federally inspected canned meats and other meat products, including frozen foods. Today, 80 percent of the meat and meat food products produced commercially are processed under the inspection program.

A special exemption applies to farmers who slaughter their own animals on their farms. Meat plants that sell all they produce "locally," that is, inside the boundaries of the same State, are not subject to the Federal Act.

Since 1956 marks the golden anniversary of the Federal meat inspection service, let's take a look to see how this Federal guardianship came about, what it has accomplished, and what it is doing now.

BENEFITS OF MEAT INSPECTION

Summary. Federal meat inspection benefits the consumer, the industry and the farmer. The consumer gains in health protection and economic advantage. The industry gains by meat inspection's powerful effect on consumer confidence. The farmer benefits through assurance of a steady consumer demand for meat and disease detection leading to control. While it is impossible to put a price tag on these benefits, it has been estimated that detecting a single tuberculous cow in meat inspection work is worth \$4,500 because of the time and effort saved in locating infected herds and eradicating the disease.

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Federal meat inspection provides health benefits to all of us, and economic benefits to the consumer, industry and the farmer. Both industry and the producer benefit from the powerful effect of meat inspection on consumer buying confidence. The farmer improves his efficiency through the prompt detection, tracing, and eradication of obscure diseases. The more disease-free meat animals he can raise and market without rejection, the better will be the consumer's meat supply, the better his price, and the better income for the farmer.

Let's take a look at each of these groups individually.

The Consumer. The United States meat industry is the world's biggest with an output of 25 billion pounds a year. In this country, we eat an average of over 161 pounds of meat (not including fish or poultry) a year. One-fourth of our food money goes for meat--the leading item in family food budgets.

Today, 25 percent of the protein in this country's food is supplied by meat from cattle, calves, sheep, and hogs. Along with this valuable high-quality protein, meat provides 25 percent of the iron and thiamine in our food, 33 percent of the niacin, 15 percent of the riboflavin, 9 percent of the vitamin A, 30 percent of the fat, and 16 percent of the calories.

Because Federal inspection is the same for all grades of meat--including those cuts that profit from long, slow cooking with moist heat--economical cuts are just as wholesome as more expensive ones.

Meat inspection costs less than a dime a year per person. Since the average consumer eats 160 pounds of meat a year, that is low-cost insurance for a continuing supply of clean and wholesome meat, free from adulteration.

Consumers now take for granted that the meat they buy is wholesome and clean, that it is safe. Fully 80 percent of our commercial production of meat is marketed with the Federal stamp of approval--the largest proportion in our history.

From the health standpoint, it is impossible to measure the savings in medical expense and the protection of the national health that has derived from contributions of the meat inspection program in the eradication of animal disease. Tuberculosis, which is easily detected in meat inspection, is one of the major diseases communicable to humans from infected animals.

Bovine tuberculosis in human beings has declined 85 percent since the tuberculosis eradication program was begun in 1917. Inspection helped speed this decline. The incidence of tuberculosis in farm herds has been reduced from about 5 percent in 1918 to 0.11 percent in 1955 by means of effective eradication measures, including detection at meat inspection points. This low incidence--though still high enough to be dangerous--makes the disease difficult to locate through other channels and difficult to stamp out.

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The consumer who buys inspected meat can be sure that it comes from a healthy animal whose tissues have been shown to be free from infection, inflammation, and other objectionable conditions. The inspected product is clean and wholesome, and the label is accurate and truthful.

The difference between an inspected and uninspected product boils down to this--it is protection for the consumer at a point where he cannot protect himself. With inspection the consumer can be sure.

In addition to assurance of a healthy animal as the source of the meat, the homemaker also gets assurance from the purple stamp that the meat has been handled under standards of cleanliness that would satisfy her most meticulous demands. Processed meat gets the same cleanliness check. Containers, methods used in filling and sealing, and the adequacy of heat applied in canning must pass inspection.

Even such things as the paint used on plant walls, cleaning solutions used in the plant, cord for stringing cured meats, and plastic packaging materials are all checked for purity.

The Industry. The packing industry recognizes meat inspection as a valuable asset, and many retailers advertise the fact that the meat they handle has passed Federal inspection.

During 1955, the industry sought the approval of the Department of Agriculture for 911 new, or remodeled, structures. Of these, 703, representing \$29,000,000 worth of construction, were approved as complying with requirements for slaughtering and meat processing establishments operating under Federal meat inspection.

The industry is alert to comply with meat inspection regulations. It has cooperated actively through the years with the Federal meat inspection service to assure the public a continuing supply of clean, wholesome meat, free from adulteration and truthfully labeled.

The Farmer. The livestock producer is a major beneficiary of the meat inspection program. He gains in two ways--from disease control and from the contribution of the inspection program to a steady consumer demand for meat.

It is important economically to the producer to know if his herd or his area is infected with disease. Early knowledge of infection is essential to any plan to stamp it out. The Federal inspection service is equipped to supply this information and direct attention to the area of infection.

This is what happens when an inspector finds a diseased animal. He makes his diagnosis of the disease, and records the character and extent of it in his daily report. These records have value other than as statistics. The information they supply, with livestock shipping records, is sufficient in most cases to fix the territory of origin. The inspector reports his findings directly to the State or Federal disease control officials having jurisdiction in the region from which the infected animal came. Then, by

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means of eartags, earmarks, brands, tattoo marks, or descriptions of animals, officials often are able to locate the farm and herd that supplied the diseased animal for slaughter.

It takes painstaking and tireless effort to pinpoint areas of infection--an essential first step in stamping out the disease. One case history illustrates the point.

The carcass of a cow slaughtered at a Federally inspected plant in Prattsville, N. Y., showed lesions of tuberculosis and was condemned. She was traced back to a dealer at Ballston Spa, N. Y. He could supply no information on the cow's origin. The ear tag number and the name of the veterinarian to whom it had been issued were given to a State field veterinarian.

He traced the animal back to a farm near Ballston Spa, then through mortgage records of livestock sales in three towns near there, until finally he found the herd of origin near Waterford, N. Y. In the search, 100 animals were tested and 16 reactors were found.

In 1955, tracings of slaughtered cattle showing lesions of tuberculosis led to the testing of 28,409 cattle in 615 herds. Of the cattle, 1,537 were disclosed as reactors. Of the herds, 440 tested clean and 175 included reactors.

Farmers and ranchers appreciate this service. It helps them to remove the cause of infection and improve conditions on the farm. This, in turn, helps to cut their production costs.

Tuberculosis is merely one example. Heavy losses from other diseases have gradually been reduced through eradication programs, and through the contributions of the meat inspection program. Progress is being made in the eradication of brucellosis. And inspection has helped in the control of actinomycosis, anthrax, hog cholera, Johnes disease, and Texas fever, to name a few.

In recent years, condemned animals have amounted to less than $\frac{1}{2}$ of 1 percent of those Federally examined. This evidence of the good health of the nation's farm stock is encouraging to both domestic and foreign buyers.

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WHAT IS THE COST?

Salaries and other costs of the Federal meat inspection system are paid by the Government. The industry reimburses the Department for the cost of performing overtime service.

From the start, the service has proved inexpensive. Net cost of Federal inspection, counting all operations, administration, and laboratory tests, is less than 15 cents an animal. Cost of Federal inspection per pound of meat is a tiny fraction of one cent.

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HISTORY OF MEAT INSPECTION

Summary. Although the meat inspection program in the United States owes its origin to economic motives, it has come to be recognized as an important guardian of our national health. The Meat Inspection Act of 1906 broadened the scope of the existing program by adding provisions for sanitary control in the plants. It also made mandatory the inspection of meat entering interstate commerce. Previously this inspection had only been permissive. Legislative forerunners of this Act, which were approved in 1890, 1891, and 1895, paved the way for the meat inspection program as we know it today.

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The Meat Inspection Act of 1906 marked the beginning of the meat inspection program as we know it today. It was approved June 30, 1906, and became effective three months later.

This measure was passed as a result of public clamor following Upton Sinclair's description of Chicago packing houses in his novel "The Jungle." The Act extended Federal inspection of meat by making inspection mandatory, rather than permissive, for meat entering interstate commerce. It also added provisions for a sanitary control in plants to assure cleanliness in operations.

These figures show what happened in one year's time. The last full fiscal year under the old law was 1906, and 1908 was the first full fiscal year under the new, broader law. The number of animals slaughtered under Federal inspection increased from 42,901,284 in 1906 to 53,973,337 in 1908. During 1906, inspections were made in 163 establishments in 58 cities. In 1908, inspections were made in 787 plants in 211 cities.

Today, Federal inspectors are servicing nearly 1,200 establishments in 468 cities. In the fiscal year 1956, some 100,000,000 meat animals were slaughtered under Federal inspection. This number is increasing year by year.

Prior Legislation

The first legislative step for Federal inspection of meat was taken on August 30, 1890, with passage of a measure providing for inspection of salted pork and bacon for export. It was taken to relieve the economic distress of livestock producers who were suffering from a loss of exports to Europe.

The export market for American meat and meat products, particularly bacon, had become well established by 1879. Then, alarmed by the widespread appearance of trichinae which they attributed to hog products, various countries put prohibitions on imports of American pork. Italy was the first country to prohibit imports--in 1879. Others quickly

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followed--Portugal, Hungary, Germany, Spain, France, Turkey, and Rumania had put an embargo on pork by the end of 1881. In 1882, Great Britain put restrictions on cattle by ordering immediate slaughter at port of entry.

The hardships brought about by these restrictions continued for a decade. But these restrictions were a potent force in starting the country on its way to Federal inspection of meat.

The Act of August 30, 1890, was limited. It referred chiefly to the manner in which the products were packed and their appearance immediately before shipment. It did not take into account the condition of animals at time of slaughter. Because it was not sufficiently inclusive, the measure failed to achieve what was expected.

Some six months later, Congress approved legislation providing for the ante mortem and post mortem examination of all cattle and hogs intended for export and interstate commerce, especially post mortem inspection of cattle the meat of which was for export; microscopic examination of all pork for export and certification of freedom from trichinosis; condemnation of all diseased animals; marking or stamping of all inspected carcasses; and labeling of food products made from such carcasses and intended for export or interstate trade.

The first inspection under the new law was made in New York City on May 12, 1891. Export dressed beef was inspected. A month later inspection was started in Chicago, and soon afterwards at South Omaha, Kansas City, Milwaukee, Jersey City, and Hammond, Indiana.

In September 1891, German restrictions on United States pork were removed. Italy, France, Denmark and Austria followed suit.

In 1895, several additions were made to the then existing program. Calves and sheep were added to the Act, and provision was made for permissive inspection of cattle for interstate trade. Congress also granted full authority to the Secretary of Agriculture to set up rules and regulations governing the disposal of condemned carcasses. Provision had not previously been made for this.

Although the motives inspiring the first legislation were wholly economic, meat inspection is primarily a service in hygiene and sanitation. During this first phase of Federal inspection provision was not made in the law to include sanitation.

Provisions of the 1906 Act

Finally, with Congress and the public aroused to the unhealthy conditions existing in the packing plants, came the Meat Inspection Act of 1906, which took effect on October 1 of that year.

This Act set up sanitary regulations and standards of cleanliness for personnel and facilities. It extended inspection to canned meats and meat products.

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This Act gives assurance that --

- the meat inspected is from a healthy animal.
- the animal was killed and meat prepared under proper sanitary conditions.
- no harmful preservative, chemical, dye, or filth has been allowed in the preparation.
- the name of the product is accurate.
- supervision of preparation extended from "hoof to can."

The Act carries a special exemption for farmers. They are required to attach a certificate in duplicate to the shipper, showing the animal as healthy and wholesome, if it is to enter interstate trade. The law provides penalties for falsification.

Since 1906, the law has been extended and modified. The Act of 1906 was essentially a one-year appropriations act. In 1907, the measure was reenacted with the inclusion of the word "hereafter." This extended the provisions of the law indefinitely.

In 1919 horses were added to the list of animals covered by the law, with a provision for separate slaughter.

Shortly after the Meat Inspection Act of 1906 was passed, seven well equipped laboratories were set up to provide facilities for making various chemical and technical examinations of all kinds of meats and animal products and of the numerous materials used in the curing and preparation of meats and their products.

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HOW MEAT IS INSPECTED

Summary. Under the Meat Inspection Act of 1906, and later modifications and amendments, the present program of supervision consists of seven essential parts. These are: Sanitation of the establishment, inspection of the animals before slaughter, careful inspection of the carcass and internal organs of each animal at the time of slaughter, processing inspection, disposal of condemned material, marking and labeling. Well-equipped chemical, bacteriological, pathological, and zoological laboratories are available to furnish inspectors information needed to make proper decisions.

* * * *

Before passage of the Meat Inspection Act of 1906, the Federal Government had no authority over the sanitation of the plants where inspection was done, to follow up on inspections, or to prevent the adulteration or use of chemicals and preservatives in processing. The present program, based on the Act of 1906 with modifications and

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amendments, consists of these seven essential functions: Sanitation of the establishment, inspection of the animals before slaughter, careful inspection of the carcasses and internal organs of each animal at time of slaughter, processing inspection, disposal of condemned material, marking and labeling.

Let's look at each one of these essential functions of the service in detail.

Sanitation of the establishment. Federal inspection begins with approval of a plant's construction and equipment. Rigid rules of sanitation include such things as ample supplies of hot and cold water under pressure and distributed throughout the plant to meet all operating needs; efficient lighting; good drainage and good ventilation; adequate facilities for sewage disposal; separation of the plant from any other plant or buildings; and convenient places at which to sterilize instruments and places for workers to keep themselves clean. The equipment--cutters, hooks, viscera trays, etc.--must be of a rust-proof material, like stainless steel, which can readily be kept clean.

Specifications are exacting. Certification by the Department means not only that the plant passed the initial examination for sanitation, but that the standards are maintained constantly. The plant is subject to continuing inspection.

Inspection before slaughter. Today, around 100 million animals a year come to the Federally inspected packing plants. Each one receives a thorough inspection.

This begins in the stockyards, before the animals are driven in for slaughter. Experienced veterinarians check the animals carefully. Any animal that looks abnormal in any way is tagged. It may be either with a "U. S. Condemned" or "U. S. Suspect" tag, depending on how serious the condition appears. This tag has a serial number for follow-through identification.

If the animal is condemned, it is not taken to the slaughter room, but is killed separately and disposed of under supervision to prevent contamination of healthy, wholesome meat. If the animal is "suspect," it is also kept apart and slaughtered separately from other animals. Every part of the carcass, especially the internal organs, receives a searching examination. If there is any question, the public receives the benefit of the doubt.

Only animals that appear completely normal and healthy are sent on for normal slaughter.

Inspection of carcasses and internal organs. Inspection after slaughter is thorough. It is made by trained veterinarians (who are graduates from accredited veterinary colleges) and their lay assistants who have received special training in this kind of work.

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Post mortem inspection begins with skinning of the animal. The head is the first part of the body removed and examined for any evidence of abnormal conditions. Next, the internal organs, which are removed from the carcass in the presence of the inspector, are checked. Guided by detailed regulations, the inspector examines by sight, touch, and by cutting into certain ones. His procedure is based on long experience in knowing where diseased or harmful conditions are likely to exist.

Then he checks all surfaces and parts of the carcass. He examines the membranes of the chest and abdomen, the various groups of lymph glands, the kidneys, split backbone, and body generally. He searches for any conditions that would indicate unfitness of the carcass for food.

A carcass found to be free from diseased or questionable conditions, is marked "U. S. Inspected and Passed." Every important cut of meat is then marked with the Federal purple meat-inspection stamp.

On the other hand, any carcass which shows signs of any pathological or other unsound condition is identified by a "U. S. RETAINED" tag and segregated for a closer veterinary examination. Special tags are attached to each retained carcass and the viscera taken from it. A retained carcass may be condemned, passed in part, or passed entirely for food, after removal of localized conditions, depending on results of the final examination.

Processing inspection. Federal inspection of meats continues through curing or processing, pickling or smoking, canning and processing, and even to the manner of shipping. Lard, oleomargarine, and meats which go into packaged and canned foods receive the same careful inspection as do fresh meats. This would include sausage, cured meats, potted and canned meats, and frozen meat food products. The purpose is to assure the use of wholesome ingredients and accurate labels so the purchaser may obtain a product that is honestly labeled as well as pure from a food standpoint.

Meat-inspection chemists test the purity of spices and other materials used in or in contact with meat and thousands of samples of meat food products. This is to guard against use "of harmful preservatives and other deleterious ingredients" and to assure against adulteration. The curing ingredients must be harmless--"smoke" must come from burning wood.

Disposal of condemned material. All condemned meat, parts as well as whole carcasses, are kept "under lock and key" until destroyed for food purposes. All condemned meats must be destroyed for food purposes in the presence of an inspector, who must file a report covering their destruction. The usual method of treating condemned carcasses and parts is to convert them into industrial grease and fertilizer. Small plants destroy the condemned meat by incineration or by addition of crude carbolic acid or other prescribed denaturing agents.

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Marking. The fluid used for marking meats which pass inspection is composed of approved ingredients--as harmless as fruit juices. Every important cut of meat of an approved carcass is marked with the purple stamp. That is the assurance to the wholesaler, retailer, and consumer that the meat is wholesome.

Frequently burning brands or hot ink brands are used for imprinting the mark on cured meats, such as hams and bacon. Sometimes colors other than purple are used on prepared meat food products, such as frankfurters, but only purple ink is used on carcasses and fresh meat cuts.

Labeling. The meat inspection service requires official approval of labels intended for use on canned or packaged meat food products. Each year thousands of proposed new labels are submitted to the Department of Agriculture for approval. In 1955, some 36,600 new labels were approved. Before this approval, each label passed an accuracy test to be sure that pictures and wording supplied an exact description of the contents. In the same year, approval was withheld from 2,265 labels and sketches because they did not comply with labeling requirements.

The rules on labeling are specific. Here are examples of regulations governing labeling:

"Labels shall contain, prominently and informatively displayed, (1) the true name of the product; (2) the word 'ingredients' followed by a list of the ingredients when the product is fabricated from two or more ingredients, except in the case of products for which definitions and standards of identity have been prescribed under Part 28 of this subchapter; (3) the name and place of business of the manufacturer, packer, or person for whom the product is prepared; (4) an accurate statement of the quantity of contents;.....

"The term 'baked' shall apply only to the product which has been cooked by the direct action of dry heat and for a sufficient time to permit the product to assume the characteristics of a baked article, such as the formation of a brown crust on the surface, rendering out of surface fat, and the caramelization of the sugar if applied. Baked loaves shall be heated to a temperature of at least 160° F. and baked pork cuts shall be heated to an internal temperature of at least 170° F.

"Potted meat food product and deviled meat food product shall not contain cereal, vegetable flour, dried skim milk or similar substance. The amount of water added to potted meat food product and deviled meat food product shall be limited to that necessary to replace moisture lost during processing."

Trained specialists. Graduate veterinarians are in charge of inspection in plants where slaughtering is conducted. In addition to 6 or more years of study in an accredited veterinary college, they must pass a civil service examination. They must demonstrate a keen sense of smell and sight, which are important faculties in this work. After passing these tests, an applicant has to work as an assistant for some

time under an experienced man before qualifying to pass on the condition of dressed carcasses. Final examination of every carcass is made by a veterinary inspector.

Meat inspectors assist the veterinary inspector in ante mortem and post mortem examinations, and in supervising processing operations. They are specially trained for this work.

Meat inspectors have the health of the people in their hands. Their thorough, conscientious work is responsible for the high degree of public confidence in the meat inspection program.

"MEATS WITH APPROVAL"

50th Anniversary of Federal Meat Inspection -- 1906-1956





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